

College Broadcasters are Our Future

by John Devecka

[BALTIMORE, Maryland - January 2004] The college radio world is one filled with a mix of fun and decisions. Do the students really want to do this for a job? I know I hear some of you screaming, "NO!" But you know what? Many of them really do. It is our job as educators and professionals to recruit for our own ranks.

One of the best ways to do that is to get involved with local college and high school stations. An even better way is to get involved with national college organizations and conferences. It is not hard, and it can be incredibly rewarding for you and the students.

NSMC 2003

With an attendance of about 3,000 students and faculty, the most recent National Student Media Convention in Dallas was deemed a huge success by organizers, exhibitors and attendees. As an attendee and panelist I must support their conclusion. A combination of print, radio and television organizations, the conference brought together representatives from all over the country for seminars, tours and exhibits. The conference included a live radio studio (with rotating student DJs and some live acts) streaming via the internet to stations worldwide, for local rebroadcast.



Nicole Scariano broadcasting from Dallas in the NSMC "studio."

I have been attending various college broadcasting conferences for a long time, first as a student, then as an exhibitor, and now as the WLOY faculty advisor. I remember the impact of meeting peers from other stations and being able to ask questions of people in "real" broadcast positions, and I always hope to see the same thing in the eyes of the students at any conference.

STUDENTS MEET THE PROS

Held at the Hyatt at Reunion in Dallas, participation in the broadcast side of the media conference was mixed between faculty advisors, students, and professionals from both commercial and educational broadcasters (licensed and unlicensed). The conference is unique among college gatherings as it really embraces and illustrates the convergence of media in the digital age.

Here they were able to talk to members of various companies, real radio DJs, staff, musicians, promoters, engineers, lawyers and even FCC staff. It was both overwhelming and an epiphany for many of the students. My own WLOY crew came back really energized; just ask our Chief Announcer. "During one of the nights, in some eclectic coffeehouse in downtown Dallas ... [we] started brainstorming," Nicole Scariano said. "Show ideas and promotional ideas flew, resulting in one really, really caffeinated night and some great plans for next semester!"

Increasingly, commercial print and broadcast media are cross-owned, share newsrooms, cross-pollinate web space and need many of the same talents. Conference sessions allowed students from other media to sit in and gain new views on our responsibility and program content. Students with no radio background learned how to start their own campus stations, while broadcast students dove into the First Amendment and censorship print sessions with gusto.

Many of the sessions covered discussions and critiques to help graduating students find that elusive radio job. The students really came prepared, with questions, ideas and hopes. Panelists from various media backgrounds were willing to help with private discussions, and their tips and secrets really hit home.

"We got some excellent questions in the panel discussion on voice-tracking," said Chuck Finney, 94.9 KLTY Director of Programming. "Clearly, this group really knew what's going on in the radio business. I was blown away at how well attended the whole conference was and by the diversity of places the attendees called home."

CBI CONVENTION BUILDS BRIDGES

I spoke with Will Robedee, the current Chairman for Collegiate Broadcasters, Inc. about the conference (CBI was one of the three media groups presenting the NSMC). "It was a breakthrough year for the CBI conference in terms of attendance, the number and quality of sessions and presenters and the number of vendors. We couldn't be more pleased with the responses we have received from those who participated."

CBI is a relatively new organization, serving educational radio and TV, but their actions belie that status. Having actively negotiated webstreaming fees for non-commercial and educational stations, testified before Congress, run a very successful and active list server, and pulling together quite a collection of panelists and vendors for a show—in only their fifth year of existence—is certainly something about which they should brag.

One of the most important things about this conference was the participation—and national support—of the Society of Broadcast Engineers. There is a trend of students away from broadcast engineering, often discussed in SBE circles. Here was a chance for SBE to put engineering folks in front of the proverbial next generation and help them. It was great for SBE Chapter Chairman from Dallas and Nashville, as well as other local chapter members, to be seen and heard on many important panels. SBE member session topics included issues for remote broadcasts, new and future technology, starting a radio station, and many more.

David Stewart, Chairman of the Dallas SBE Chapter 67, participated in the panels on remote broadcasting, new technology and starting a new station. He was pleased with both the participation from attendees and panelists, and took something important back with him. "I talked to management about how we probably should do more of this kind of hard contact [with] the larval next generation of people." Stewart typifies those interested in steering more students into an understanding of new technologies, both to fill future engineering ranks and to find new and different uses for media and technology.

Live365.com was present as an exhibitor, served the radio web stream for the live studio and Chief Operating Officer Raghav Gupta served as a panelist.

He expressed great support for CBI for "putting on quite the show in Dallas. The enthusiasm of CBI members, especially the students, for radio, webcasting and new technologies was apparent and heartening." Live365.com has already committed to support the November 2004 NSMC in Nashville.

NPR participated in the conference with its Next Generation newscaster program. This included training, mixing, newsgathering and production of a news piece for the conference – during the conference. Working on a real,

short deadline, these students put together excellent pieces in time for the final closing ceremonies.

Next Generation Program Director, Doug Mitchell, was beaming with enthusiasm over the work these students produced. "We had students [do] an excellent job with the work and the tight deadline, yet tell a story with some depth. One of our project students is graduating in May and I know has applied for an internship at NPR for this coming summer. This is what I want students to do – get interested in the way we report and tell stories enough to where they want to join us."

SOLID SESSIONS

Warren Kozeriski, faculty advisor for SUNY Brockport noted, "Many of the broadcast sessions were standing room only with attendees spilling out into the hall. I think it was one of the best college broadcasting conferences in terms of variety of topics and interaction with students and professionals that I've attended in at least seven years."

Four of my students from Loyola College in Maryland attended and brought back notebooks full of ideas. They really do listen when I talk to them, but *peers* make such an important impression. I could tell them something over and over, but five minutes with other students from other stations and it all sinks in. Their biggest hassle was picking among all the options for sessions. Scariano said, "Each of us was faced with an entire booklet of classes to choose from, similar to our scheduling course packets, except no class was for a semester. However, for many I wish they could have been."

The CBI organization has long embraced educational television with radio and had a number of panels featuring television-oriented topics. Patti Smith, VP/GM of KVUE-TV Austin, said, "Both the panelists and attendees benefited from the ability to exchange ideas on a face to face basis. These students are the future of the industry and I believe that one of our responsibilities as working members of the media is to "give back" by addressing issues of interest to these students and by providing them a window into the real world of broadcasting."

REACHING OUT

More professional people are starting to see the value in working with educational radio. Not only is there a chance for gear to change hands, there is a chance to find just the right person to train for your assistant, or to clue you in to what the current crop of students thinks about the broadcasting world. Rumor has it that the Audio Engineering Society will probably participate along with SBE at the next big conference

This year's panelists and demonstrators came in from Apple, Belo, Broadcasters General Store, Comrex, FCC, NPR, Prophet Systems, Scott Studios, and many other well-known names. Students and faculty members got a sort of mini-NAB with good exhibitors, good after-session gatherings, and many chances to interact with their peers in and out of sessions.

Perhaps most importantly, these educational broadcasting folks were the real focus of the conference, unlike at an NAB, where it is sometimes hard for a student to be taken seriously, or given real time in a booth. They were able to learn a lot directly from the vendors, ask serious questions and get serious help, something difficult to do at a conference of the NAB's scale. Oh, and they *buy* stuff too.



Dozens of well-attended sessions ran concurrently on a wide variety of issues.



Students View Exhibit at NSMC

I hope more of our broadcasting brethren discover this conference in Nashville (www.collegebroadcasters.org) so the students can continue to get the benefit of their experience without being third or fourth class citizens at NAB. You would be astonished at just how important your help is to a student. Try it some time. I think you will find the rewards far outweigh the effort required.

John Devecka is Operations Manager for WLOY Radio at Loyola College in Maryland. He continues to envision a world with an NAB-scale college media conference and lobbying power. Some share his vision, most think he's a whacko. Both are right. Let him know your thoughts: wloy@loyola.edu